

**Lake Champlain
Fisheries Technical Committee
Meeting Minutes**

January 7, 2010 - Gordon House, Grand Isle

Member Attendees: **UVM:** Ellen Marsden, **USGS –Coop:** Donna Parrish; **NYDEC:** Emily Zollweg, Bill Schoch; **VTFWD:** Brian Chipman, Chet Mackenzie, Bernie Pientka, Kevin Kelsey, Shawn Good; **USFWS:** Nick Staats (scribe), Steve Smith, Wayne Bouffard, Brad Young, Bill Arden; Madeleine Lyttle, Dave Tilton **Sea Grant:** Mark Malcoff

Other Attendees: Eric Howe, Meg Modley (LCBP) James Elhers (LCI), Bob Qua (LCI)

1. **Minutes recorder volunteer.** Nick Staats (USFWS) will record minutes.
2. **Approve Minutes from previous meeting.** Approved minutes from September 1, 2009 meeting.
3. **Staffing losses/Changes/additions.** New York reports that Leo DeMong has retired. Dave Armstrong from the Albany office will be available in the short-term for Sea Lamprey control activities. Vermont reports no staffing changes at this time. USFWS will be hiring a full-time technician prior to this field season. A sea lamprey control staffing chart was drafted and will be reviewed by Bill Schoch.
4. **Lamoille River Treatment.** Brian Chipman reported that the 2009 Lamoille River sea lamprey treatment went well and resulted in a good kill. There was an issue early in the treatment concerning river flows (higher flows than the power company estimated) but the problem was identified quickly and the application team adjusted feed rates. Wayne Bouffard reported that the Services post-treatment assessment found that 95% of collected dead lamprey were sea lamprey with the remaining 5% being silver lamprey. Lamprey mortality was observed from below the application point down to the mouth of the river and onto the delta. The group discussed the possibility of a delta population. Steve Smith will investigate this summer.

Chet MacKenzie noted low non-target mortality was observed especially with fish species. Deceased mudpuppies were found throughout the treatment area. Leahy funds will be used to continue the mudpuppy trapping survey on the Lamoille River this winter. Trapping activities will repeat previous efforts; be expanded downstream; and may include work on Lewis Creek. Donna Parrish presented early results of these efforts: in December a total of 29 mudpuppies were captured, 10 of which were recaptures (including 5 individuals from last year- two of which were recaptured twice- and 3 marked in November). So far, at least 5 of the individuals marked last year survived the treatment.
5. **2009 Lamprey wounding rate indices.** Brian Chipman summarized preliminary wounding data collected this fall. Main lake wounding for lake trout (533-633 mm TL) is 55 wounds per 100 fish – an increase from 2008 levels. Landlocked salmon (432-533 mm TL) main lake wounding was similar to 2008 at 32 wounds per 100 fish; Inland Sea-Malletts Bay wounding was slightly higher at 38.

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Shawn Good described a pilot project initiated this fall to utilize a trapnet to capture lake trout brood stock in the Grand Isle hatchery cove. The net was set for a week and 342 lake trout and 59 Atlantic salmon were captured. The group discussed the merits of the technique in terms of assessing sea lamprey wounding (versus electrofishing). The trapping data will need to be further analyzed before any conclusions can be made. The trapnet project raised other issues that the group agreed will need to be revisited including the wounding rate size-class index, stocking rates and the need for a Lake Champlain salmonid management plan.

4. LaPlatte / Little Ausable USACE projects. Brad Young updated the group on lamprey barrier status. The Corp has been asked to conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a barrier on the LaPlatte River. Brad will be meeting with Bill Schoch to discuss the Little Ausable River barrier including funding options and fish passage issues. The cost of this barrier may be reduced if the Corp is not involved and using Leahy Funds in addition to the New York bond for the project.

Chet MacKenzie coaxed Brad into telling the group the latest Morpion Stream barrier episode. Presently, all plans, permits, easements, and money are in place for this project to move forward. However, the Mayor of Notre Dame de Stanbridge has not been given the authority to sign off on an MOA for construction to begin.

5. NY Pesticide Application Certification. This year's pesticide training/meeting will be held in Ray Brook with a tentative date of February 25. Brad presented a draft agenda for review.

6. Leahy Appropriation: Balance, Existing Allocations, Proposed Expenditures. An account status handout was provided to the committee as well as a table of proposed treatment equipment needs and costs. With current commitments and anticipated expenses for FY 2010, an account balance of over \$422,000.00 is anticipated. It's expected that an additional \$700,000.00 will be forthcoming through the Commission in 2010. Steve Smith explained the equipment list and noted some of the specific future purchases including an equipment trailer, pup trailer supplies and a new robotic baylucide application boat (the last item is very future). It was determined that there was a need to set up an easier supply purchasing arrangement using the Service as the main buyer. The group was asked to review the equipment list.

7. Lamprey Genetics Research Presentation. Cassidy D'Aloia presented her thesis on sea lamprey genetics in Lake Champlain during lunch break. Cassidy is a student at Middlebury College and with guidance from Bill Ardren and lamprey samples from Wayne Bouffard, impressed the group with an excellent Power Point presentation.

8. Lamprey Program Funding. Dave Tilton updated the group on the Federalization of the sea lamprey control program. Dave and Brad will be meeting with Marvin Moriarty later this month to discuss but Dave indicated that Vermont and New York haven't pushed the Service for the need (or that's the perception) and Marvin is reluctant to take this on at this time. James Ehlers

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commented that the private sector supports this and is moving forward in getting the Service authorized to take over the program.

9. Conceptual Fisheries Proposals to the LCBP. Eric Howe briefly described several “projects” reviewed and ranked by the Technical Advisory Committee. Mark Malcoff talked about the bass study he submitted which ranked #8 of 37 concept ideas. This study would look at survival and dispersal of bass following bass fishing tournaments on Lake Champlain. Bill Ardren presented his salmon project: Restoring naturally spawning populations and a tributary fishery for Atlantic salmon in Lake Champlain. This elicited more discussion of the future of the salmonid program as did the trap netting project earlier in the meeting (see item 5 above). It was suggested this “project” could be accomplished (funded) thru different avenues other than the LCBP.

The group discussed the current project ranking process, the history of that process and the Technical Committees relationship with LCBP as it relates to Lake Champlain fisheries research proposals.

10. Atlantic Salmon Evaluations. Steve Smith voiced concern of low salmon adult returns to tributaries despite an apparent good lake population. More discussion on Lake Champlain salmonid management ensued which included the need to look at multiple factors that may be causing the low returns (stocking practices, size at stocking, sources of stocked fish, etc). Chet informed the group that Vermont will be meeting to review their brood stock management and large lake salmonid programs. How the Technical Committee and the Lake Champlain program fits in will need to be resolved after this meeting. Members agreed for the need for a more compressive look at the data and development of a plan but agree it will be a major task.

11. Angler Diary Programs. Bill Schoch proposed dropping the smelt angler diary program which presently has only 9 participants. The group agreed as there was very little information gained from the program at this time and fishing success was mostly related to ice conditions (lack of ice).

12. American Eels. The Service will be repeating the 2007 eel sampling in the areas previously surveyed in the 1980’s by Doug Facey and George Labar. This sampling was conducted as the result of a request by Quebec in order to monitor the success of their eel stocking and eel passage program on the Richelieu River.

13. Alternatives Work Group RFP development and coordination. The Fisheries Technical Committee requests that proposals reviewed by the Alternatives work group should be forwarded to them for review during the June FTC meeting. A list of all projects including the working groups recommended project should be included.

14. Publishing options for the Strategic Plan. Ellen Marsden continues to edit the Strategic Plan. Once completed Chet and Brad will review Ellen’s edits before the package is sent to the

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Great Lakes Fishery Commission for publication. There will be no cost associated with the publication as it will just be a part of the Great Lakes technical report series.

15. **2009 Cooperative Annual Report assignments.** Brad reviewed report assignments (similar to previous years) and will request contributions via a future E-mail. Brad has developed a Web site for the report as well as the Fisheries Technical Committees meeting minutes. Brad asked for input on the site.

16. **Other items and announcements.** Bill Ardren wanted to remind folks to please provide comments on the fish and wildlife section of the LCBP's Opportunities of Action.

Brian Chipman noted that the Lake Champlain Research Consortium is looking for abstracts for the upcoming conference in June.

17. **Next meeting** is scheduled for March 25, 2010.

18. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.